

838 Concerning homosexual intercourse among women, I was unable to discover any facts.

839 So far as I know, bestiality does not occur.

6. Pregnancy, Birth

843 The Pangwe recognize the beginning of a pregnancy by the nonappearance of menstruation; they are also familiar with the fact that a slight indisposition and headaches about a month after cohabitation may cause one to suspect pregnancy. Once pregnancy [843] is established, the man continues to have intercourse with a woman for about two more months, but then relations with her must be broken off, since it is feared that the fetus would be destroyed or at least harmed by the seed that it must "drink." It must also be emphasized that this prohibition is not always observed; indeed, [755] there is a medicine, sand in water, which a woman is supposed to drink if the man has intercourse with her shortly before the confinement. The sand is supposed to scour the seed from the body of the fetus.

[843] Usually the beginning of a pregnancy is greeted by the woman as a joyous event. There are also cases, however, when it is not welcomed, for instance, when prohibited intercourse with men of 847 related kin groups has consequences, when a woman is pregnant by 278 an "unloved man," or generally if she does not want to assume the burden of rearing the child or wants to evade the command of sexual abstinence. In such cases -- and they are by no means rare -- the fetus is aborted (a gbwē' abūm, a kū'e abūm, "to drop the belly (fruit)"). The medicines, for the greater part poisonous substances with which we have already become acquainted as fish poisons, are: 1) Piptadenia africana Hook. f., Leguminosa (tūm IV), bark loosened in pieces, pared and boiled, and the extract, when cooled, used as an enema; 2) Cylicodiscus gabunensis Harms, Leguminosa (edūm), used in the same way; 3) kernel of the fruit of Mimusops djave (Lan.) Engl. (tree = adžāb, kernel = ngōñ-ebōñ IV), ground in water; 4) Rubiaceae

- 847 278 oyô', fruit chopped up, and Cognauxia, Cucurbitacea
(mbjmyé' i I), roots ground, both boiled together, strained, and
after cooling, used as an enema; 5) Maesopsis tessmannii Engl.
Rhamnaceae (nkáng' i), bark boiled, strained, and used cold as
an enema. In this last case, its inclusion among abortives was
probably determined by the fact that the wood of the tree is
stronger in the upper part of the trunk, while below it is weaker.

844 When the confinement is near, the woman usually goes to her
parents if her native village is not too far away and if conditions
permit her to do so. /275/ Otherwise, she stays at home as do all
older women who have borne three or four children.

Before the confinement the woman stays quietly in the house
from two to three days, more rarely four days. Cases are not
infrequent, however, when the birth pangs take the woman by
surprise during her work in the fields, and she has to bring the
child into the world without help, although when this happens
she will try to attract the attention of passers-by or women in the
vicinity by screaming and shouting, and the latter will assist her
and take her and the child into the village.

It is strictly prohibited for male relatives or strange men to
witness the birth (osōn, "shame"; some even said nsō'm, "crime").
Even the woman's own husband is present (osōn applies to him also)
only when there are no female helpers, on which occasion he must
take their place. This is, however, a rare and exceptional case;
ordinarily there are helpful and experienced women aplenty, who
flock to the woman in childbed to encourage her and to assist at
the birth by clasping her body from behind and thus supporting it.

[279] Without medicine, of course, a birth cannot take place. The
sap of Cephalonema polyandrum K. Sch., Cucurbitaceae
(ejǎžǔ'm), and Fleurya aestuans (L.) Gandich, Urticaceae (ngūkū'n
IV), is allowed to trickle into the vagina. The sap is slippery,
"smooth," and will thus effect a smooth birth.

845 The actual birth takes place without any kind of assistance
if the child has what the Pangwe also regard as the normal head
position. In case of the feet-first position or other irregularities,
the child is forcibly pulled out and is then -- so it was said -- al-
ways dead. Difficult births seem to be quite rare since my various

842 meticulously and in due time gives her permission to have relations
833 with her husband. The first relations must take place on the day fol-
841 lowing the end of the menstrual period so that the not yet completely
dried blood in the organs of the woman can mix with the sperm of the
man and make a kind of paste called nsûe a mon (lizard of a child),
which goes back up into the womb of the woman and there develops
[78] and becomes the child. If the woman has relations with a man
before the prescribed time, she will definitely become sterile.

842 Sterility, for which many causes are recognized, can be treated,
except in the case noted above, in case of bad conduct, and in case of
voluntary abortion in the course of a first pregnancy. In order to
847 abort, the woman finds a midwife (ngah minanga) who sends her out
844 to look for the bark of the afamega vine and the turn tree, which she
crushes and with which she makes an infusion. The woman goes to the
brush and takes four irrigations of this infusion, and that is enough to
induce abortion.

842 On the other hand, the woman who wishes to have children may be
barren for several reasons:

843 (1) She may have aborted naturally and without desiring it. An
842 abortion is recognized as having a natural cause, that is, without
malignant external intervention, in that the patient recovers three or
four days after the accident and without having suffered too much. In
this case the midwife gives the invalid a prohibition called awos which
restrains her from going near any man other than her husband. She may
not say a word to a man except through the mediation of another woman
who acts as interpreter; she may not give anything to a man without
this intermediary, and may not sit where a man has sat; and for this
last reason she always carries a little seat with her. This prohibition
must be observed for two or three months, after which the woman is
again allowed to have relations with her husband. If at the end of
three more months she is still not pregnant, the midwife then gives
her a treatment which consists in having the patient take some soup
(abura) made of pumpkin (ngon) ground on a stone and mixed with herbs
(mia mi nyo, oyah) gathered and chopped by the midwife. These she
cooks with salt and pimento in a pot at the bottom of which has been
placed a copper ring (kon ango), covered by a large leaf during the
cooking.

794 one - tends to re-establish this elementary order, it is a rein-
769 statement, a pledge of fertility and power. Apparently the Ngil
[17] resembles a great many other "associations" that have existed in
Gabon, especially the Mwiri of the Ngounié people. (2) It con-

2. Cf. A. Maclatchy, "Organisation sociale des populations de la région de Mimongo [Social Organization of the Peoples of the Mimongo Region], " Bulletin de l'Institut d'Etudes Centrafricaines, I, I, 1945.

stitutes primarily an instrument of struggle against the sorcerers (böyém), to the extent that they attempt to interfere with the normal order. But it is much more than that: it is the indication of a power superior to that based on kinship, a grouping with a great capacity for control (doubtless the most powerful).

794 The Fang have known other associations of men with specialized functions - or rather those that create "specialists,"
[53] such as the akûm, who directs the ceremonies linked with the male dance called makuma. The akûm, who appears also as a sort of chronicler-singer, intervening especially at the time of
[847] funerals and affairs concerning fertility (search for the "sorcerer" responsible for an abortion that might result in permanent sterility, (3)

3. Cf. E. Trezenem, op. cit., p. 79.

ceremonial intended to lift the incest which creates sterile marriages). The akûm in daily life is distinguished from the non-initiates by being subject to a number of special interdicts. He is a "respected, or rather a feared, person," for to him is attributed "great power." "In order to reach this situation he must have been
[535] taught by another akûm; he must have learned the interminable
674 songs that last a whole night long, and then with his own hand kill one of his close relatives...." (4) This brief description is

4. Father L. Martrou, "Les Éki

813 As soon as pregnancy is recognized, the parents have to observe all sorts of bityi, prohibitions, the first of these being to stop having sexual intercourse, which would bring on a miscarriage or produce a monster. They must not go near a corpse nor attend funerals. The woman must abstain from certain foods /91/, the eating of which would harm the child: fish, which would cause skin diseases; bat and duck, which would mean webbed fingers and toes; snake, which would mean a child born without limbs or with atrophied limbs, etc. The woman must avoid taking long strides and stepping over holes or ditches and must stop wearing drawers if she has done so before. The husband must not nail or tie anything, which would make for a difficult delivery; he must also abstain from certain foods. During pregnancy the woman anoints the belly and breasts with palm oil mixed with baa, wears a special belt of Okumu liana (a kind of solanaceous plant), and avoids leaving the house barefooted.

"Accidental" miscarriages are generally attributed to the breaking of a taboo (nsem) and entail ritual purification; so long as these have not been carried out, the woman is not allowed to speak to any man except her husband, at least directly, nor to look a man in the face.

[783] "Criminal" miscarriages are attributed to sorcery or, more precisely, to an évu, which may belong to the woman herself; they entail more rigorous purification; the lochia are submitted to a kind of magical "disinfecting" before being buried secretly beneath a road so that

● 847 passers-by will walk over them without knowing. Voluntary abortion, very rare in former times, is becoming fairly common, particularly among unmarried mothers in Christian families; it is brought about by vegetable emmenagogues (one is extracted from papaya root) or by introducing into the neck /of the womb/ a roll of twisted bark (I could not find out from what tree). Sometimes women induce abortion in one of their co-wives out of jealousy.

844 The first delivery and often succeeding ones usually take place in the woman's native village (jañ). A husband is not allowed to take wife and child back home until after payment of what is really the final installment of the bride price, particularly a substantial present for the mother-in-law, which is repeated at each birth, whence the proverb, "A mother-in-law's basket is never full." The parturient is delivered in a sitting position, with her mother or nryi (mother-in-law or co-wife of higher rank) holding her from behind, and assisted by a midwife, mbialé binga, formerly an official in

844 one of the women's associations. The child is delivered on a mattress of banana leaves. The umbilical cord is cut with a special knife, perhaps the same used in circumcisions (1), and it is buried under a

1. This is not certain; since the circumciser is a man, we may question whether he would use a woman's knife.

banana tree, whose fruit will be étyi to people of the opposite sex from the child. The placenta is buried by the mother herself in a secret spot, or in her place by a woman of her own blood; afterward the mother may tell her child, as a mild way of cursing, "I know where your placenta is." The baby is immediately wrapped in a loin-cloth and laid beside its mother, after being shown to the father if it is a boy. The following day the baby as well as the mother is rubbed with warm oil, and it is given the breast. /92/

845 Difficult deliveries are quite common, and the midwives' technique extremely uneven. Although some may know how to effect artificial delivery, even version, most of them are limited to managing and to using magic, like placing an axe between the mother's legs. If the woman dies in childbirth, sorcery is suspected or a grave nsem like incest; in the old days the baby, even if born alive, would have been buried with its mother. A stillborn child also arouses great suspicion about the mother, who may have to go through an ordeal and be forced to confess an offense presumed to have caused the death of the fetus.

847 Some writers have claimed that baby girls were sacrificed at birth as being of no value to the clan. This seems very unlikely unless the infanticide was the result of an accusation of sorcery, which could also apply to a boy. What is true is that a woman giving birth only to girls would be considered the victim of a spell or a breaking of taboo.

The birth of twins is propitious, for they are thought to be necessarily mie or mmimie, that is, free of évu (the same word mie means "confinement" or, more precisely, the "labor" of childbirth). Twins receive traditional names that vary according to clan.

846 The first coming out of the house /relevailles, "churcing"/, ékulu mon, "baby's coming out," takes place three months after birth, if everything has gone well. The woman starts bathing in the

1. Birth and Name Giving

844 Only women, the village matrons, are allowed to help a mother in childbirth. Men are absolutely excluded, even husbands. A woman who gives birth on a journey prefers to go off by herself into the forest rather than ask for her husband's help.

As soon as the child is delivered, his umbilical cord is cut and he is carefully washed. The remnants of the cord are wrapped in a cloth and buried out of the way. In the case of a chief's son, especially that of the head chief, the remains are buried, as we have seen, at the foot of a sacred fig tree. (1)

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1. Ficus elastica.

[60] Great importance is given to the tree's growth, and to touch it is strictly forbidden. Any violation of the tree would be considered an attack upon the human being.

851 A few days after birth, the baby is carried to his father,
● 847 who may accept it or refuse it. However, the latter [571] happens only if the child is deformed or crippled, in which case it is ruthlessly sacrificed. The religious rites (1) connected

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1. See Bulletin de la Société
Neuchâteloise de Géographie
[Bulletin of the Neuchâtel Geo-
graphical Society], 1910, "Les
rites de la naissance chez les Fân"
[Birth Rites among the Fang], by
Father Trilles.

with birth are numerous, but the only ones that seem to me to be totemic are name giving and the choice of the baby's totem.

The name is solely the father's choice; it is often determined by attendant circumstances, atmospheric or other, or by some local happening, a hunt, a fishing expedition, the